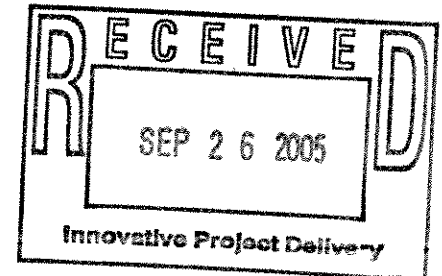


Christopher W. Cummings  
6362 Etheridge Lane  
Manassas, VA 20112

September 21, 2005

Virginia Department of Transportation  
Innovative Project Delivery Team  
Attention: Jay Loftus  
1401 E. Broad Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219



Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am adamantly opposed to putting in HOT lanes on I-95/395 in northern Virginia. It will destroy carpooling and van pooling as viable ways to commute to work in Washington, D.C.

*HOT Means Refuting the Entire HOV Rationale*

The HOV lanes were intended to reduce the number of vehicles entering, circulating in, and parking in, Washington, D.C. The idea was to get people to leave their cars at home and join with others in the same vehicle. Fewer vehicles plying the roads into the city also meant less exhaust gas pollution. The HOT concept flies in the face of all that. HOT means more vehicles, nearly all of which will have only one occupant (the driver). On top of that there is the distasteful statement made to the working population by having a special road for rich people (hence the nickname "Lexus Lanes").

*HOT Inevitably Means Crowding*

Private contractors are offering to spend a lot of money to implement HOT on I-95/395. For HOT to work and to provide a profit to the private contractors, a whole lot of people will have to use the lanes and pay the tolls. That's in addition to all the busses, motorcycles, off-duty police vehicles, car pools and van pools already using the lanes. It is clear that there are many, many people who would be willing to pay for a chance to move more quickly than they do in the regular lanes. There is physically no way to avoid serious crowding of the restricted lanes, *even if* permission for hybrid vehicles to use the HOV lanes is withdrawn in 2006.

*A Third Restricted Lane is No Answer*

Adding a third lane to the existing HOV lanes on I-95/395 will not solve the problems that HOT lanes will cause. Adding another lane means eliminating the shoulder. That spells disaster. There will be no place to put a broken-down vehicle, change a flat tire or work an accident if all of the space between the jersey walls is active traffic lanes. As it is today, even with shoulder area, an accident or breakdown quickly causes severe congestion extending for

miles. Eliminating the shoulder can only make things worse. (The enormous expense of taking room from the regular lanes and the massive additional traffic problems that will cause make it a non-starter.)

*Guaranteeing Free Flow is Easier Said Than Done*

The private contractors say they can regulate the number of people entering the system to keep traffic moving smoothly. Besides being an assertion that can't be proved until the system is approved, installed and working, it contradicts the logic of the whole proposal. The private contractors get their investment back when lots of people pay tolls. It is in their interest to maximize the volume of *toll-paying* drivers. They will have no control over the unpredictable occurrences that can stop traffic dead in its tracks - breakdowns, a bus catching fire, rubbernecking of an accident in the regular lanes, an accident in the HOV lanes, or even a big pothole. But they will have ensured that the restricted lanes are packed to capacity. And if one of those events occurs, the tie up will be fast and severe. Those who suffer will include van and carpoolers, as well as toll payers.

*The Promises Being Made Are Unrealistic*

Whenever something is promised for nothing, the deal is usually a bad one. Much is being promised here, and the contractors claim that the costs will be minimal. I am convinced that if HOT lanes are installed on I-95/395 it will effectively put an end to organized carpools, vanpools, and those improvised carpools where an individual driver picks up a couple of riders. That all of these will be squeezed out is just as certain as the contractors' desire to recover their substantial investments.

For all of these reasons I beg you not to let this project go ahead. HOV is a good thing for Virginia, for Washington D.C. and for the entire mid-Atlantic region. Please don't kill it.

Sincerely,

*Signature on file at VDOT*

Christopher W. Cummings